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FLOOR DEBATE

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trying to be proactive. Water is an important...it's one of the most important resources, I say, that we have in this state, beside people. In fact, it is the lifeblood of our state. It is important to our economy, not only to our economy, but also our environment, as all of you are aware. Also, Nebraska is the second heavily irrigated state in the United States, followed only by California, so I think that tells you. And I just saw in the paper yesterday an article about Buffalo and Hall Counties' top 2003 Nebraska corn yields. But the important thing that I gathered from this article was it said Buffalo County's 153 acres averaged 202 bushels per acre. That was on their irrigated cropland. The county's 16,000 acres of dryland corn averaged 44 bushels. If we take that difference, that's a 158 bushel difference; we take that just by an average of \$2.50, we come out with about \$400 an acre just difference. So, I mean, I think that just points out the importance of irrigation to our state in what it does bring back. Again, it's important that the NRDs, and we have 23 of those across the state, have the opportunity, if necessary, to raise their levy to do some of the water projects and some of the water things that we have been talking about in this bill. We talk about the funding. We need this scientific data. We need this data to make, I think, appropriate decisions, and that of course was a very important part of the discussion in the task force meetings. We need the bill. We also need some of the additional funding to make this a reality. Again, this is just a first step and we will continue to have legislation through the years. And I guess I do want to point out that I believe that Senator Bourne is misleading all of you when he's talking about \$14 million, \$14.5 million. We're talking about \$2.5 million. And I think that we probably are talking any time money is short you make do. But it is very important that at least we have...

SENATOR CUDABACK: One minute.

SENATOR STUHR: ...this certain amount of seed money to begin doing and collecting some of that data that is needed across the state. Water is important to each of us, whether you live in a rural area or if you live in an urban area, and I think the drought has certainly brought this to all of our minds. So I hope that you will support this amendment and also this bill,